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ELEMENTARGEISTER AS LITERARY CHARACTERS IN THE MIDDLE HIGH GERMAN EPIC

Some time ago I began a search for fairies in the MHG¹ epic. After several months of investigation I came to appreciate the feelings of the old French chronicler, who, in the disillusioning light of day, sought out the trysting place of fairies, the wood of Brecheliant—

Une forest mult longue e lee
Qui en Bretagne est mult loee. . .
La seut l'en les fees veir
Se li Breton nos dient veir,
E altres merveilles plusors; . . .
La alai jo merveilles querre,
Vi la forest et vi la terre,
Merveilles quis, mais nes trovai,
Fol m'en revinc, fol i alai,
Fol i alai, fol m'en revinc,
Folie quis, par fol me tinc.²

These wilful sprites would not be found. Two years' study of the question has convinced me that the fairy—not only as we know the character from Shakespeare or from Perrault, but also the fay of mediæval romance—is practically unknown to MHG.³

At the same time the final results of this research were anything but disappointing. Fairies, to be sure, were not forthcoming, but kindred spirits in legions answered the call. And if these were

¹ On the whole I have avoided abbreviations, but I have taken the liberty of writing MHG for Middle High German.

² Wace, *Roman de Rou*, 6396.

³ This is not the place to present the proof of this statement. It is made with the full knowledge that traces of the fairy-mistress, for example, exist in MHG, but also with the firm conviction that in every case evidence is lacking, that the author has conceived the character in that capacity. He either misunderstands the character himself, or he transfers its attributes to some well known Elementargeist, such as the getwerc or the merwip, in the attempt to make it understandable to his public. Generally the French fee appears in MHG as a human; and though perhaps trailing some clouds of glory from its previous state, is none the less rationalized and no longer a fairy to the MHG mind.—The investigation of this question forms a subject in itself and is not included in the present study.

sometimes wanting in the airy grace and irresistible charm of their Celtic cousins, they developed characteristics no less remarkable and no less worthy of investigation. Nor need this investigation suffer if, instead of being made from the standpoint of mythology, as is usually the case, it attempt to contribute toward a better understanding of the literary style of our authors. Mediæval literature contains much that is boring to the modern reader: the episodical nature of the narratives, the endless repetition of motives and even of whole plots, the long descriptions of dress and manners, the generally superficial treatment of the theme, are apt to be dampening to any but a scientific interest. Still, the mediæval epic has a preference for that quality which the Swiss critics of the eighteenth century proclaimed the prime requisite of all true poetry, on the ground of its never failing interest: *das Wunderbare*. The wonderful is the very soul of these narrations. No expression is too extravagant, no comparison too extreme. The heroines are always more beautiful than any other woman on earth; the swords are wonderfully wrought so that they will hew through anything, though, to be sure, there are at the same time armors which no sword can cut; the precious stones light up caverns as brightly as the sun; journeys undertaken by the hero serve to open up unheard-of marvels and give occasion for mighty deeds of prowess; and so on. This spirit in all its phases is typified by no character better than by the Elementargeist, who in one place or another in MHG manages to appear in every conceivable capacity and as a participant in every kind of adventure. Christianity had supplanted the roster of pagan gods so that not the faintest echo of those quondam heroes of Germanic poetry is to be found in the MHG epic; but the so-called lower mythology flourished as never before or since in the history of German literature—naturally, with modifications and concessions to the fashions of the day.

It is the purpose of the present study to deal largely with these concessions to the tastes of the time. There were two great forces at work in Europe during the Middle Ages, and we shall see that almost all the changes from their traditional nature which the Elementargeister suffered at the hands of the MHG writer, are traceable to Christianity and Chivalry. Accordingly, while some of these spirits still haunt their time-honored abiding places in the fastnesses of the wilderness, a more civilized type appears at the courts of kings, takes part in tourneys like other knights, con-

forms to all the rules of etiquette, and even intermarries with humans. We find some faring forth to war on the heathen; in fact, nearly all of them who are friendly spirits or are sympathetically drawn by the author, show in some way their Christian belief. But the Christianization of Elementargeister was by no means complete. The preaching of the Church against all pagan beliefs soon had the effect of putting these beings in the category with the powers of evil. Consequently, they appear in close connection with witchcraft, dragons, devils, and heathens (who naturally take the form of Saracens in the Middle Ages). This, of course, does not militate against the author's fondness for these characters; rather it enhances their literary value. In some few cases they are converted. Generally they exist that the hero may show his good faith and marvelous daring in the destruction of them.

The hero knight naturally occupies the center of the stage. Even when the title rôle (if I may borrow this theatrical parlance for the epic) is played by an Elementargeist, as sometimes happens in the popular epic, the action begins and ends with the hero. Alberich, by all odds the most prominent of the MHG Elementargeister, is a spirit of wonderful power, who holds the success of the whole plot in his own hands; still it is Ortnit and not Alberich whom the poet is singing. If this is true of the Volksepos it is doubly so of the Kunstepos. In both the Elementargeist is first and last a subordinate character, at best an accessory to the hero.

It might seem from this that the characters we are about to consider are of secondary interest. This by no means follows. Subordinate characters always have a distinct value, forming, as they do, the unconscious documents from which one may read the author's mind often more clearly than in the protagonist. The MHG writer of epics, particularly of court epics, was a slave to a literary style. His product could follow but one course: it had to be a hero eulogy, and for this person there were invariable traits prescribed. In the details of the romance the author had greater freedom, hence the importance of the Nebenpersonen. That these are, alas and alack! too often but stock figures is another proof that the average MHG poet found more pleasure in repetition than in invention—not so surprising in a period when the author thought to recommend his book most highly by claiming that it was the retelling of an old tale. At the same time, we find secondary characters ever and anon who distinguish themselves in

one way or another, and some who easily eclipse the hero in real interest. Where the Elementargeist does not stand out as an individual character, it may still be used to the delight of the reader and to the glory of the author. This is particularly true when the author has the saving grace of humor, and better still, when he imputes that gift to the character.

Such are some of the phases of the subject which present themselves for consideration. I have reserved for a larger study my conclusions *in toto*, and wish to offer here only a survey of the field with particular reference to the following points: the portrayal of the home and surroundings of the Elementargeister; the manner in which these characters are introduced into the story; and the general attitude of the author toward them. Although I have not confined my research to MHG, I am now presenting matter which lies entirely in that field. I think it is eminently worth while to let the much vexed question of comparative mythology rest for the nonce, and to take a survey of the results rather than the causes. This is in no wise meant in depreciation of the excellent scholarship that has sought by every means available to throw light on the beliefs and traditions of our forefathers. But mediæval literature has been dissected so frequently and so ruthlessly by motive-hunters, grammarians, and mythologists, that the fact that it is, after all, literature, has too often been lost to view. The literary critic has a right to consider these monuments in the form in which they were presented to the contemporaries of the author, if he is trying to arrive at the effect intended by the author.

CHAPTER I

In the case of no character are the surroundings so significant as that of the *wildez wip*. She never appears in civilization and is elemental to a marked degree. The type is confined to the writers of the court epic who lavished on it some of their best efforts in the attempt to make it more hideous than other monsters. Her introduction into the story is always episodic: the hero is in the midst of some adventure when suddenly this new terror bears down on him. Thus Seifrid de Ardemont and his companion are fighting a dragon when a *wildez wip* appears:

aus aim hol bey dem vellsen
so kumpt gelauffen her des tewfels trawt,
ain weib von willder artt vil ungehewre;
mit ainem kolben, den si trueg.
da mit kam si an dy zwen ritter tewre. (207)

The encounter ends quickly and disastrously for the *wildez wip*.

The description of the woman in the foregoing quotation is mild compared to the terms Wirnt uses to portray a similar character. Wigalois, bound for the land "ze Glois, dâ der heiden saz," comes into a wild forest. The way loses itself in a maze of fallen trees, and the doughty knight brings up on the thickly wooded bank of a stream which is too deep to ford. While he is considering the feasibility of a raft, he sees ein *wip* running toward him from a nearby *holer stein*. She is black all over with a hide like a bear's. The hair is long and tangled. Her head is large, her nose is flat, and her eyes peering out of her hairy face are like two gleaming candles. Further—

ir brâ, lanc und grâ;
grôze zene, witen munt
si hêt: ôrên als ein hunt
diu hiengen nieder spannen breit. . .
der rücke was ir ûf gebogen:
da engegen ein hover ûz gezogen
ob dem herzen als ein huot. (6297)

Her fingers are those of a griffin and her breasts hang down her sides like huge pockets. Truly—

vil grôziu schöne was der
und gut gebærde tiure;
wand si was ungehiure.

The author dwells on this description with unconcealed delight. After exhausting his imagination in one direction he resorts to another turn of fancy to strengthen his picture. "Sô was diu schone Larie schoner danne ir drie" (6302), he naïvely remarks. He even takes occasion to contrast her with Meister Hartman's Enite and Meister Wolfram's Jeschute. Finally, to put her unhumanlike nature in unmistakable terms, he says:

swen si ir minne solde wern,
daz wære ein sûrez trûten. (6323)
daz wip dûhte in unsüeze.
starkiu bein und krumbe füeze
hêt si; sus was si gestalt,
ein kurziu naht diu machet in alt
swer bi ir solde sîn gelegen. (6347)⁴

This creature is called the starke Ruel and is so fleet of foot that no animal can outrun her. She snatches up the unwary Wigalois with as little ceremony as if he had been a "sac" and runs off to her den with him. The end of the adventure is melodramatic and ludicrous. After relieving the knight of sword and armor, she binds him with a withe and, taking him by the hair, presses him down over a log which she means to use for an execution block. She swings the sword and in spite of the protests of the author, is about to finish her work when—suddenly she flees. The fortunate interruption was caused by the neighing of the knight's horse which the wip took for the roar of a dragon nearby. She lived in constant terror of this frightful neighbor of hers:

si entran im ofte ûz dem hol
ûf ein ander steinwant,
als ir der zagel wære verbrant. (6445)

One would hardly expect to find a more monstrous character than Ruel, yet Heinrich vom Türlin, who had the knack of carrying the matter of exaggeration a little further than anyone else, has treated us to a creation that surpasses Wirnt's in every respect (Krone 9314 f.). Gawein, worn out by his encounter with a wazerman, is lying in the snow (wan im tet diu hitze wê. 9325), when he is startled by this apparition. The hideousness of the woman is beyond compare. Twelve ells long, her body is covered with a coat of black bristles comparable to those of the porcupine. Her

⁴This is an idea that is often met with, and marks well the distinction between the gehiure and the ungehiure. The woman that a man cannot "minnen" is absolutely beyond the pale.

ostrich-like eyes burn like coals. The distance from eye to nose is enormous. The latter member, ungehiure, ze wunder breit und vlach, exudes a deadly stench. Her mouth, from which extend tushes like the boar's spreads from ear to ear.

dirre selben valantine
hiengen nider uf daz kinne
zwèn gerunzelt kinnebacken;
als ein leitbracken
hiengen ir diu ören zu tal,
dêswâr diu wâren niht ze smal,
sie wâren als ein wanne;
und geschach ie lieb manne
von ir minne, des wundert mich. (9375)

On and on the description goes. "Diu beine und die vüeze, die wâren vil unsüeze." As for her breasts—

sie hâte vor bedeckt sich
mit zwein solhen brüsten,
dâ mit man wol berüsten
zwèn blâspelge möhte,
der ietweder töhte
ze drîzec zentenâren,
ob sie ze giezen wâren. (9384)

All that is bad enough. But the author knows no bounds. He proceeds with a pruriency that would have done credit to Murner and his contemporaries, but is rare indeed in MHG.

nider gürtel umb daz lit
dâ was sie recht geschaffen
glich blôz einem affen
und sô vil wîrs, daz diu stat
was geschicket sam ein komat
diu dar under verborgen lac,

and so on, ending with one of those anticlimaxes which characterize these pictures and which here makes nature responsible for this product of the author's imagination:

ungetân und unguot
was sie, daz gloubet,
natûre het sie beroubet
und aller süeze betoubet.

The end of the episode falls flat. The wildez wîp tucks the knight under her arm and wants to carry him to her lair in the mountains. He manages to cut off her leg and escape. From the elaborate beginning one might have expected an important chapter in the

epic, but it is evident that the author introduces this character for the sole purpose of describing it.

In Apollonius we again find a wildez wîp and a dragon in close proximity, which here, as in Wigalois, proves the salvation of the hero. Noticeable in this case is the absence of the description of her personal appearance. Only the lines,

mit iren langen tatzen
pegunde sy in vaste kratzen
und vaste in mit irn armen slanck (9575)

show that the author pictured this character with the same general features which we have already considered in detail. This self-restraint on the part of the author might seem remarkable if one were not familiar with his style. The hero tumbles from one adventure into another so rapidly that there is no time for details. Some conception of the wonderful nature of the narrative may be gained by reading the setting of the episode in question. Within the narrow limits of two hundred lines (9400-9590) Apollonius kills his seventh giant; takes part in the general fight that follows; is carried off by the dragon that breaks up the fight; is dropped from a cliff by the dragon and lies unconscious for a day and a night; is then carried by a wildez wîp to her den, where he remains, still senseless, three days, while the wîp is being hunted around the neighborhood by the dragon; finally comes to himself and kills the wîp on her return, thus liberating a crowd of children from her power.

The nature of the wildez wîp, as may readily be seen, admits of no development. She is little more than an animal: she shows no intelligence, never speaks, bellows like a brute when wounded, etc. It is simply a crude ornament which the author gives his romance, introducing it casually among other wonders far from human habitation and human ken. He gives himself no trouble to connect the character with the rest of the story. Nor would this be easy to do, since it is impossible to imagine the wildez wîp having other than the most hostile relations with men. It is to be noticed also that one wildez wîp exhausts the ingenuity of an author. A case in Tandareis seems to contradict these conclusions. Here wildiu wîp and wilde man in numbers are mentioned as living in Albuin's realm. But they are given no individuality,⁵ and in reality they

⁵ It is clear, however, that we are dealing with the same type of character as the others. Cf. "ungeschaffen was der lip" (9899); also "manec wîp grôz diu swarz unt ungehiure was," and "manegen wilden man grôz und vreislich getân" (9986).

have nothing to do with anyone in the poem. For that matter Albuin, although she here appears as a human, has evidently been an other-world being at some stage of the tradition, and her land is marked by the same characteristics. Her people are called a "wildiu diet diu sich von andern dieten schiet" (8579). And Tandereis' advent here is accomplished by a typical other-world journey (8405 f.).

As said above, we owe the character of the wildez wip to the imagination of the court epic writers. Such characters have almost nothing in common with a sprite like the wildez vrouwelin in the Eckenliet. Her introduction is by no means so incidental as that of the wildez wip. She appears as a beautiful (201) woman in distress—is literally chased into the story by the giant Vasolt—and serves to bring Deitrich into contact with his inevitable foe, the brother of the slain Ecke. When this service is accomplished she pays her respects to the hero and passes out of the story (201). "Min hôhez leben von wilder art" (171) is her own characterization of her nature, and this is certainly that of the author; for although living wild in the mountains, hunted like any other game, she is one of the most sympathetically drawn characters in MHG. The artistic manner in which the whole situation is handled is another evidence that the poet of the Eckenliet was gifted as none of his contemporaries was.

The wilder man is an Elementargeist of attributes somewhat different from those of the wildez wip, and yet not entirely to be separated from that character.⁶ It is significant that the two are found in the same poems. In Tandareis (cf. above) they are mentioned together without any distinction. As far as outer characteristics are concerned the wilder man in Apollonius (9886 f.) resembles a wildez wip not a little.

Der was kotzott und rauch;
Payde ruck und pauch
Waren greyss als ain hunt;
Er hett ainen weytten munt;
Sein augen waren rot und fratt. (9887)

At the sight of this unhallowed being the knight grasps his sword. But this Pylagus is a naïve creature who is only concerned for the

⁶ These characters are not to be confused with dwarfs, who are also sometimes designated as wilde man. Cf. Wolddietrich B 795 and 716-721. The wilde frouwe 842 f. is either a dwarf or such a being as the wildez vrouwelin of the Eckenliet.

safety of the knight. The meeting takes place on the borders of a terrible wilderness, the utter remoteness of which is attested by the words of the wilder man:

Was tüst du güter man, all hie?
 Ich gesah zu zehen jaren nie
 Kainen man in disem walt.
 Eyle von hynne balt! (9898)

The valiant knight naturally scorns to flee from danger. Consequently he gets into adventures the like of which no other mortal could have survived. Suffice it to say that he rides out of that wilderness on the back of a panther.

We find *walldman* used side by side with *willder man* in *Seifrid*—a term which, as we have seen from the foregoing pages, might well be applied to the whole species. This time it is the knight who helps the wilder man.

An ainem tag der küene
 rait mit der claren magt
 durch ainem walld vil grüene.
 er horte, das ain stymme unmassen clagt. Etc. (150)

He rides in the direction of the voice and finds a wilder man in fierce combat with a dragon. Of course, the knight takes sides against the wurm, and wins the fervent thanks of the wilder man. What the latter looks like, we are not informed. We only know that he lived in a "höl" close at hand.

In every case thus far considered, the *Elementargeist* has appeared in the neighborhood of other mythological characters, together with whom it inhabits a remote region. *Althesor*, another wilder man in *Seifrid*, seems not to be troubled with any of these neighbors, but the extreme isolation of his abode is particularly emphasized. In the first place we have to do with another other-world journey here.⁷ *Seifrid* reaches the country through the help of that popular mediæval bird of passage, the griffin. When he clambers down from the griffin's nest,

so sicht er ainen willden man,
 des plichk zu sehen was gar ungefüege. (438)

Like the wilder man in *Apollonius* this one can ask—

was dich her pracht in dise wüesten willde;
 wann pay meinen tagen
 in dem gebirg nie mer sach mennschen pillde. (439)

⁷ Cf. Panzer's edition LXXII f.

Not only is this country remote, but Althesor lives in a very out-of-the-way corner of it: he and the hero travel all night before coming among men (457). Althesor's visits thither are so rare that the "tschachtelur" remarks:

das du sunst kumbst, das sind ye frömde märe! . . .
mich hat ser wunnder,
was dich aus dem gebirg her hat geiaid. (460)

Despite his location, however, Althesor is not to be reckoned with those spirits which the author uses for Stimmungsbilder. He plays a rôle similar to that of the wildez vrouwelin in the Eckenliet.

According to Heinrich vom Türlin, Sir Gawein is the discoverer of an odd spirit which should be mentioned here. By the waterside he finds strange footprints—like a dog's in front and like a human's behind. He tracks the beast to its lair which proves to be a wild, rocky, thorny spot. The sight of the object of his search almost makes him regret his foolhardiness:

[er] was allenthalben vol
an sinem libe behangen
natern und slangen
und was ein wilder wazzerman. (Krone 9234)

As so often happens, the knight has arrived in the nick of time to save a maiden from maltreatment. He rescues the girl, but the wounded wazzerman calls a multitude of his fellows by his unearthly cries, and Gawein is glad to escape this swarm. Strangely enough he is safe from them only on water. Heinrich vom Türlin had no respect for mythology and it is clear that here he is recklessly mixing conceptions in order to effect new results. He merely uses wazzerman for want of a better term.

Passing from these primitive characters we come to a type which is more poetic if less marvelous, namely the merwip or merminne. What has been shown above—that wilde man and wildiu wip are not to be considered apart from their environments—applies unequivocally to the merwip, whose element has become a part of her name. Furthermore, her rôle is never an integral part of the plot.⁸ But here the resemblance between the wildez wip and the merwip ends. The latter is a sympathetically drawn figure of the Volks-epos,⁹ who is usually as attractive as the former is repulsive.

⁸ With the possible exception of diu rûhe Else in Wolfdietrich B. But there still other things enter into consideration which make the case a little different.

⁹ The merwip of the Kunstepos is often fused with the veine and appears as a merveine; e. g., Lanzelet's godmother.

The home of the merwip is generally at the bottom of the sea. The educated raven of Oswald has occasion to learn this in his passage to the Orient. He is sitting on a rock in mid-ocean regaling himself with a fish when a wildez merwip catches sight of him. "Daz selbe merwip," the poet informs us, "diu gienc im nach lange zit." To his dismay she pulls him from his rocky perch and carries him down—"hin in des meres grunt" (660). The raven finds a genial welcome among the merwip and accepts their hospitality to the extent of ordering something to eat—kæse und brôt, semelen und guoten wîn, und dar zuo einen brâten guot. Once sated, he thinks only on escape, which he accomplishes by a simple ruse. That is, he gets out of their hands, but it requires divine help to bring him out of the place. From this we might conclude that the passage to and from the land under the water is possible, only through supernatural means.

It is a well known fact, however, that water sprites are by no means confined to the regions under the sea. A fountain, a stream, a lake, may form the door by which they leave their own element to appear on land—never far from water, however. Thus when Dietrich after his battle with Ecke—

. . . reit al durch ein ouwen,
dâ vant der wunderküene man
bi einem brunnen wünnesan
slâfende eine vrouwen.
diu was só minneclîch gestalt:¹⁰
ir kunde niht gelîchen,
und was zem brunnen durch den walt
geslîchen sicherlîchen. (151)

She is "vrô Babehilt genant" and is queen over ein schoenez lant im mer ân aller slahte swære (158). The wounded knight hesitates to wake her, but his dire need leaves him no alternative. She proves as gentle as she is beautiful: instead of being offended she looks on him with favor (sach in guetlîch an. 152) and gives him a magic salve to heal his wounds. In this incident the same poetic ability is evident which we have seen displayed in the case of the wildez vrouwelîn. The introduction of the character is motivated by her timely aid to the hero. There is nothing that breathes of

¹⁰ Beauty is one of the most typical attributes of the merwip. In Daniel we read of one—

der was aller ir lîp
als ein rôse getân. (4280)

exaggeration, yet the few lines used to sketch this figure speak more than the longest-winded eulogy of the court epics.

Another friendly merwip appears in *Wolfdietrich A*, this time in rather startling guise. The desperate hero goes in search of aid in recovering his lands. After having passed through a desert he descends into a smiling plain by the seaside and, half delirious with privation, falls asleep among the flowers and grass which grow waist-deep along the water's edge. Then—

ûz des meres grunde gienc ein ungehiurez wip:
si truoc an ir libe von schuopen eine hût.
si sach ouch dem geliche sam si wære des tiuvels brût. (470)

She is covered with water moss, and a long beard hangs from her chin to her feet. She is wet and slimy. Her hair extends to her heels und dannoch fürbaz. Her eyes are set back in her head two fingers deep in sockets a span's width. Her feet are like shovels and "unsælic was ir ganc." No wonder *Wolfdietrich* is taken aback when he wakes to find this monstrosity in possession of his sword. He apologizes for his presence on her soil, for she claims the "anger" and all it bears. With true feminine wisdom she promises to feed the hungry man; not, however,—another human trait—until he has satisfied her curiosity as to who and what he is. When she learns that he is a king she offers him three kingdoms if he will take her to wife. *Wolfdietrich* protests that he has sworn not to marry. But even if he had not, he would rather die than wed her: the very devil in hell would come to the wedding. The merwip shows a sense of humor; "vor freuden wart ir mündel (!) wol drier spannen wit." She steps back, throws off her horrid appearance by shedding her fishskin, and stands before him the loveliest of women. It is needless to say that the knight regrets his oath of celibacy. But this merwip will have a human husband, if not one, then another. She begs for one of *Wolfdietrich's* brothers when he has conquered them. Siren-like she promises all the wonders of that country below the sea:

"nu lâ mich dînen bruoder füern an des meres grunt:
ich mache im tegeliche wol tûsent wunder kunt.
Swaz daz mere bedeket, daz stêt in minner hant.
dar zuo ob dem wâge hân ich wol drizic lant.
alle schräwazen wil ich im ze eigen geben
und elliu merwunder: wie möhte er schöner leben?" (495)

The vastness of this domain below and above water is interesting. Such exaggeration is common in the popular epic. The dwarf

Walberan, for instance, extends his sway over many lands, and the boundaries of Virginal's dwarf domains are indefinite.

In *Wolfdietrich B* the merwip appears as a somewhat different character. The poetic setting of *A* is lost. Instead of the flowered seashore we have a night camp in the woods. The hero is not asleep but is standing guard over his companions, and is deprived of his sword by a spell instead of losing it by neglect. The author has nothing to say about the appearance of the unwelcome visitor except that she is hairy and goes on all fours like a bear. Her change of appearance takes an entirely different aspect here. It is not accomplished until *Wolfdietrich*, who, bewitched by her spell, has wandered about for half a year a *Nebuchadnezzar* of the woods, has consented to take her to wife.¹¹ Then she takes him in a boat to a land over the sea, "dâ hetes ein künicriche und ouch ein witez lant" (335). There she springs into a fountain (half of it hot, the other half cold) and comes out diu schoenste über alliu lant. With her plunge she has lost not only her hirsute coat but the name of rûch Else and, in concession to the religious beliefs of the author, her pagan nature. The author has used a merwip as the basis of this character, but the unhumanlike features are explainable on the ground of magic instead of coming from the *Elementargeist*-nature. Diu rûhe Else occupies not a little space in the poem, but after her transformation and baptism she is in every respect like a human and so of no further interest in our study.

If the merwip or merminne is usually thought of in the last analysis as a beautiful and friendly spirit, what shall we say of the merminne whose power *Demantin* defies in behalf of his host? (2373 f.) The character is somewhat complicated. Like the wildez wip she is strong and wields a club for a weapon. She is also hostile to men, and yet she has a human husband. Here the other side of her nature comes into evidence. In view of her human relations it is almost impossible to conclude that she was hideous, for apparently no MHG writer ever thought of coupling a man and a wildez wip, for instance. It may be, of course, that the man in this case is constrained by magic, for this merminne, like Else, seems to have such powers. Among other things she causes the

¹¹ The connection with the popular tradition is too patent to need elaboration here. For the various sagas concerning the deliverance of a beautiful maiden from some repulsive shape, generally followed by her marriage with her deliverer, cf. Laistner, *Rätsel des Sphinx*, I, 78 f.

waterfall, which forms the entrance to her home, to disappear when she takes up her dead husband and flees from Demantin. Queerly enough the knights who are liberated have nothing to say about their sojourn under the water.

Another example of a mixed conception is found in *Salman* (728 f.); in this case, however, the effect is on the surroundings rather than on the character itself. A merminne is introduced into the story who aids Morolf for a brief space and is then dropped out of the narration quite as casually as she is brought in. The merminne lives by the sea and is served by "wilde getwerg," hence her dwelling is called a "holer berg zu Kastel."

The characters thus far considered have natures that definitely distinguished them from men. Not only are they different from humans; they also have little intercourse with them, and dwell in places hardly accessible to them. These characteristics naturally vary in the same degree. The most primitive characters, the most animal-like, are the farthest removed and are hostile to men.¹² When we come now to the two *Elementargeister* that are of the commonest occurrence, the giant and the dwarf, we find this process of evolution in all its stages. The fact is naturally not without cause. The time is almost unthinkable when these *Elementargeister* were not present to the minds of men. On the other hand, giants and dwarfs are undeniable facts occurring ever and anon as freaks of the human race. Hence we may expect to find them not only as wild spirits of nature, but also—more usually—as representatives of the type that lives in intimate relations with men. Chivalry put the finishing touches to this tendency, and in MHG these characters are often recognizable as such only by their size.

The abiding place of giants who do not live among men is a matter which in the main seems to have been vague in the minds of the MHG writers. In *Lamprecht's Alexander* (5072 f.) we hear of a land of *gigande* which the adventurers invade, but we acquire no idea of its nature. In *Reinfrid* (18729 f., 25030 f.) and *Herzog Ernst* (5013 f.), where the tradition of the giants of Canaan finds ¹³ *13* I shall not attempt to say which of these elements is the cause of the others. The marvelous does not sit on our doorstep. The uncommon thing is related of places we do not know, for then we cannot contradict the narrator. By the same token, things that really do exist, but exist at some distance, are lent wondrous qualities by our imagination. The untried is even apt to be thought of as dangerous, pregnant with adventure, perhaps actively hostile. And so on round the circle.

repetition, there is a more sustained attempt to portray giants as a race, living in a country of their own. Here they also appear in large numbers, and seem to have an organized government.¹³ But in no case is the reader treated to a scene in giant land—the imagination of our writers does not extend so far. The activity of the giants in both Herzog Ernst and Reinfrid takes place among the pygmies or among men. And throughout the story of Rother the giants are away from home, which is mentioned as a distant and little known land (630).

The natural dwelling place, however, is most often given as a forest—which, considering the fact that nearly every adventure of these romances transpires in a forest, can hardly be called very definite. Sometimes it is a *berc* within the forest. Thus Dietrich rides forth *gên der wilde* to find the giants who inhabit the *birge Trutmunt in dem walde* (Goldemar). The five giants in Laurin, who meet their death in such short order at the hands of the knights, are called into the *berc* from the neighboring woods (1487). Sigeneot lives in a forest and takes his prisoners to a *berc* for safe keeping. Baldemar collects the favorite toll of a hand and a foot in the forest before the *burc* of Marsiljan (Wolfdietrich D VII 31 f.). It will also be remembered that the giant herdsman whose features Kalogreant describes (Iwein 418), spends his days in the forest of “Breziljan,” guarding strange beasts.

The cannibal giant in Wolfdietrich D (V 54) has his home in the mountains of a wilderness. This ingeniously contrived character offers some diversion in a poem where wonders are common enough. On his pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, Wolfdietrich lands on an unknown shore and leaving his boat in charge of a sailor, penetrates deep into the forest. In his absence a giant finds the sailor asleep, whereupon he takes him by the hair and slinging him over his back, carries him away toward the mountains. When the hero finally appears to bring him to reckoning, he is toasting the unhappy seaman before the fire. Not only is the incident itself novel: the aspect of the “*ungetoufter vâlant*” is such as not to belie the name.

sin antlit was dem langen wol einer ellen breit.
gel wâren im diu ougen, als uns diz buoch seit.
sin nase was geschaffen krump also ein widers horn.
von dem waltaffen wart manic helt verlorn. (V 57)

¹³ In Meleranz likewise the existence of such conditions is indicated by the remarks of the giant Pulaz (4445 f.).

Add to this a black face framed by white hair; the largest mouth ever seen, filled with gleaming teeth; the ears of an ass; the whole set off by engestlîchiu cleider; and we have a picturesque devil, to say the least.

No one expects a giant to be handsome, but this author shows some talent in conjuring up incompatible features. Hardly less repulsive are the looks of the giantess Roma whose appearance in the poem is unmotivated¹⁴ but not unwelcome (VII, 115-136). She overtops the trees. Her nose and chin meet, and her mouth stretches from ear to ear. Her eyes are like those of an ostrich.¹⁵ Last but not least, her feet are so large that it would take the hides of two hinds to shoe them. Roma, when she sees the knight, laughs in what she intends to be a friendly way, but the laugh has the effect of frightening him. The giantess knows her deficiencies, however, and explains that she is not so bad as she looks. She has often been in Kriechen lant and knows his father and mother. She insists on entertaining Woldietrich in her home.

Sie brâhte in heim ze hûse, dâ vant er siben wîp
in einer vesten klûse, geschaffen also ir lîp. (128)

The hero feels less at ease than before, but his hosts reassure him and invoke God's blessing on him. On the fourth morning Roma consents to his departure, and to show her good will, carries him and his steed out of the wilderness.

Diu mîlte hôchgeborne zuhte in dô ûf sich,
einem eichorne gebart sie wol gelich.
bî einer tagewile truoc sie ros und man
wol zwô und zweinzic milen über daz gebirge dan. (135)

The extraordinary features of the characters just described¹⁶ belong more strictly to other types of Elementargeister, and are applied by our author here for the sake of a little extra color. The

¹⁴ We can imagine that in an earlier version her introduction was better motivated. The situation was probably similar to that of the merwip in Woldietrich A. There is some indication that Roma saves the hero (127) and probably from starvation (126, 131, 132).

¹⁵ Cf. the wildez wîp in the Krone (cf. p. 3). Other similarities are not wanting; e. g.—

zwô vil grôze bruste sie an ir lîbe truoc.
"swen din ze wibe gluste" sprach der degen kluoc,
"er hête den tiuvel freissam, wol ich daz sprechen sol." (117)

¹⁶ To this type of giant also belong Birkhilt and her daughter Uodelgart (Eckenliet 228 f.).

giants are awe-inspiring folk but the dread they cause comes rather from their size, strength, and ferocity than from a hideous appearance. These are the qualities which the author emphasizes over and over until they become very monotonous. The play of imagination which signalizes the sketching of such a character as the wildez wip, for instance, is wanting here. Variety is discovered only in the length of the giants and in the nature of the armor they wear.

I know no better example of these limitations than that afforded by the four giants who appear one after the other in the Spielmannsepos Orendel. The first provokes little comment (790). Orendel encounters three hundred heathens among whom rides ein rise freisam who seizes the hero, carries him over fürst und hôhe berge, and throws him tief in einen kerkêre. This enemy of the faith has his labor for nothing, however, since the Virgin takes pity on the prisoner and frees him.—The second rise freisam, “vor dem kund lebendig niemant bestân,” is named Mentwin and is also from the ranks of the heathen. The Saracens being unable to cope with Grawe Roc, send for their champion. Nor was his a mean appearance:

er was wunniglichen gefar,
 er kam ouch keiserlichen dar. (1267)
 in mohte kein ros nie getragen:
 daz sin ros solte sin . . .
 daz was ein helfant junge
 der gieng sô wol zuo sprunge.
 sin gedecke was von silber wize
 und gieng dem helfant uf den fuoz. (1197)

His equipment occupies the poet for two pages: first the bejeweled shield; then the golden helmet, fearfully and wonderfully made, with a device of bells and singing birds in a linden, etc., etc. This elegant person does not carry a club but a spear “vier klâftern lanc.” Despite all this brave show, Mentwin naturally falls before the Christian champion who distributes the giant’s finery among the farnde diet.—And now the third giant, Librian, puts in his appearance. He hails from der wüesten Schalunge (1542) and comes riding like the others among his fellow heathens, ein rise freisam. Librian acts as spokesman for the army. With confidence and familiarity he leans over the wall of Jerusalem and demands Orendel (1446). If the request is refused they are going to burn the heilige grab. Orendel properly armed with David’s sword

does battle with the heathens, but before he could find the boasting giant he had to betake himself "von dannen fürbaz ûf den Jordan." By help of angels the hero slays him.—The fourth giant, Perian, is introduced a few lines further on in exactly the same words as the preceding one, and is disposed of in the same way. Perian distinguished himself by wearing three byrnies: one of horn, the next of silver, the innermost one of steel.

The home of the giants in Orendel may be said to be far from the dwellings of all good people. The outlines are vague: a desert and heathen surroundings challenge the imagination of the reader, who must supply the details himself. As giants come more in contact with men, the author feels called upon to fix their habitation more definitely. Dietrich, in attempting to reach Virginal's berc before the others, loses his way in the forest and meets Wicram, ein rise unmâzen lanc mit einer stangen stehelîn (315). The unarmed knight falls a prey to the giant who takes him to the burc of Herzog Nitger, his master. Here we find other giants serving the duke. But the bond between Nitger and his servants is not strong. The giants are but slightly civilized and do not stand in the slightest awe of their master. They come to the burc on occasion but they really live outside: below the burc is a waterfall and a mill, and by the side of these is a cave where the giants sleep (364). When Dietrich proves too much for these giants one of their number blows a horn to call another giant, Hülle, who is intended to be more ferocious and terrible than the ones who live in subjection to Nitger.

ez was der aller kûenste man,
der ie gewuohs zu erge.
die stange nam er in die hant.
swaz er der este ie begreif,
die vielen vor im umb daz lant. (510)

Hülle does not live with Nitger at all but in einem vinstern wüesten tan three miles distant (510).

In *Wolfdietrich D IV* we again find twelve giants in the service of a human, this time a heathen by the name of Belmunt. Their introduction into the story gives rise to another of those episodes which is so typical of this sort of poetry. They always begin with the chagrin of the hero and end with the discomfiture of the heathen, beast, or Elementargeist, as the case may be. Here again the scene is laid in a forest. *Wolfdietrich* and his men are enjoying the

beautiful weather by the side of a woodland spring. While they rest they lay aside their armor.

nu was durch aventiure gestrichen in den tan
 Wolfdietrich der küene, ein ritter lobesam.
 zwelf risen gröze wurden ir gewar:
 des waldes eitgenôze huoben sich dô dar
 mit starken stahelstangen und mit swerten breit.
 âne wer sie dô viengen die helde vil gemeit,
 wan sie nacket wâren: ez wær anders niht ergân.
 sie wurden dô gefüeret uf eine veste dan. (4)

Wolfdietrich makes the welkin resound when he discovers his loss, whereupon Belmunt sends his henchmen to take him captive.¹⁷ The ensuing fight with the twelve giants is wholly without distinguishing features. The hero enters upon a career of blood which does not end until Belmunt's "waltrecken," himself, and a large part of his "ingesinde" have been put out of existence. It is interesting to find that Belmunt's following seems to be entirely of giants, and that these live with him in the castle. Wolfdietrich finds them making merry in the palas.

I have taken up the folk epic separately, by no means because I hoped thus to come at the popular conception. The so-called popular epic and the court epic have both made their delineation of Elementargeister conform in large part to the manners of the Middle Ages. In both the giant appears as knight¹⁸ and in both he shows traces of popular tradition. What difference there is, is a matter of degree, and is traceable to the style of the epic rather than to tradition. For that very reason it may be profitable to consider the development in the court epic apart from the other.

The ideal knight appears in flattering contrast to the hesitating, incapable, and weak. The protection of these less favored mortals, the liberation of those who are held in durance vile or who are unduly taxed or oppressed, is the mission of the knight and forms the unvarying theme of the court epic. The knight of the Helden-dichtung takes whatever adventure comes his way. Giants arise

¹⁷ The giants are represented as very clumsy: running down the mountain sie nâmen manegen val (15).

¹⁸ Cf. the Rosengarten. One would not know that Pusolt, Schrutan, Ortwin, and Asprian are giants: they are mentioned merely as four of the twelve küene man who guard the garden (6 f., 48 f.). Later (95) they begin to be mentioned as giants and without more ado they are brought forward among the other recken. Schrutan has been at Gibeche's court for twenty years (D 279).

in the middle of a strophe (Wolfdietrich D IV 4) without provocation and without the formality of an introduction. Wolfdietrich is forced to slay Baldemar who falls on him unaware, and thus he, incidentally, frees Ceciljenlant of this unsavory character (*ibid.* 32). The hero may fare forth for the pure love of excitement as when Dietrich "wolte gerne sehen die risen ungefüege" in the mountain of Trutmunt (Goldemar 4) or seeks other wonders "durch mengen ungevüegen tan" in the neighborhood of his capital (Sigenot 1). But the knight of the court epic is more generally bound on an errand of liberation when he rides abroad and this mission is very apt sooner or later to bring him into conflict with those arch-villains of olden times, the giants.

Wigalois, out on such an expedition, is startled in the night by terrible cries for help. He follows these—

den walt uf und zetal.
der was rûch und enge.
durch dorne und durch gedreng
fuor er wol eine mile.
nu sach er bî der wile
sitzen zwêne starke risen
bî einem fiure uf den wisen,
die bî dem sêwe lügen. (2060)

It is a wild, uncanny setting, in keeping with the deed of violence that is transpiring. The giants have stolen a maid from Arthur's household and are doing violence to her. The boy knight prevails against the giants and saves the maid.¹⁹

In similar manner Erec is brought to fight with the two giants who are shamefully misusing a knight they have captured in the forest (5294 f.).²⁰ Iwein kills Harpin to liberate the sons of his

¹⁹ For, of course, he gives battle at once. The author allows himself a delightful sententious comment just here:

ezn sol ouch dehein biderbe man	wie möhte wir vertriben
niemer gerne übersehen	die langen naht und unser leit
swâ dehein schade mac geschehen	niwan mit ir sælekheit?
deheinem reinem wibe,	unser fröude wære enwiht
ern wendes mit sinem libe:	und hiete wir der wibe niht.
daz ist mîn site und ouch mîn rât.	got müez in genædic wesen!
wan swaz diu werlt fröude hât	wirn möhten ân si niht genesen. (2091)
diu kumt uns von den wiben.	

²⁰ Cf. Seifrid 334 f. for just such another episode. The hero, brought to the scene by the cries of a woman, finds two giants abusing a knight while the maid stands helpless by. After the death of the giants it is also necessary to settle with their mother.

host and to relieve the family from his further machinations (4357 f.). Here as so often in the court epic, the reader is warned beforehand of what is to come, so that the Elementargeist does not come on the scene unexpectedly or unannounced. Iwein offers another example which is still more striking (6080 f.). Our hero reaches a burc where he must spend the night or fare much farther. The villagers try to discourage him by being discourteous. He is admitted to the burc by a sardonic porter who admonishes him that the exit will not be so easy. The warning is completed when he questions a crowd of young women whom he finds slaving over "borten" in a "wercgadem." He learns that they are there as a sort of yearly tribute paid by their lord: he had thus saved his young life from destruction at the hands of two giants with whom every guest of the burc must fight. It is only after a night of royal entertainment that Iwein has to face the adventure.

The court epic in contrast to the folk epic has a strong tendency to motivate its episodes, as the foregoing examples show. This is at one with the tone of the court epic which is much more realistic in language and in action than is the folk epic.²¹ In consequence of this we also find a disposition in the court epic from the beginning, to give giants a fixed abode. Not merely to present them among the followers of a king, as Isealt, a faithful member of Arthur's household (Lanzelet 7535) or the giants in the service of Matur (Daniel 410 and after); but to make them masters of their own establishment, generally a castle. These dwellings become more and more elaborate in the court epics of later MHG.

The Eckenliet which shows many points of resemblance to the court poetry, if not in style, at least in matter, has a description of a giant castle of the most elegant sort: that is, Vasolt's burc. As Dietrich approaches it he crosses a meadow "mit bluomen wol bespreit." A zadelboum adorns this plain and in its shade stands a beautiful tent. Seats and fountains add further to the attractiveness of the place. In the background lies the castle itself:

Ein wunneclichiu burc dâ lac.
 diu lûhte alsam der liehte tac
 von edelem gesteine
 hie rôt, dort grüene, gel unt blâ.
 wîz schein von stolzen berlen dâ
 und ouch von helfenbeine.

²¹ Panzer brings this out in his excellent *Vortrag über das altdeutsche Volksepos.*

getwerc in klârem golde fin
hâten ergraben wunder
an dirre veste. . .
ein knoph oben ûf der bürge bran
alsam der morgensterne. (230)

Further description of this dwelling is interrupted by Dietrich's battle with the two giantesses, with which the poem breaks off. It is probable that in the lost portion Dietrich gets a view of the burc on the inside which doubtless corresponds to what we have here. That it is the seat of the king's court appears from 229.

Tristan desires Petitcriu, Gilan's fairy dog, and for this reward is willing to free the duke's land of the tribute imposed by a neighboring giant (15895). The giant is

höchvertic unde vermezzen,
und hete ûf der rivâgen hûs
und hiez der Urgan li vilûs. ("vilûs=haarig." Bechstein)

The battle, which is a typical one, takes place in einem harte wilden walt, but when wounded the giant betakes himself wider heim zehant in sine veste balde. The author has no occasion to comment on the particulars of the kastel (16099). Apparently the giant lived alone for Tristan enters and leaves the place unmolested, and the enraged giant, sallying forth again, brings no one with him to assist him in the losing fight.

Urgan's castle by the waterside may have been an excellent "veste" but Heinrich vom Türilin can tell us of something better. In the Krone we meet a giant whose notoriety pervades the poem long before the monster appears in person.²²

Der was gesezzen bi dem mer
Und was sô starc, daz er ein her
Über al niht envorhte, etc. (5471)
Assiles was der rise genant
Und saz in einem einlant
Daz was starke wilde. (5520)

The reader is not favored with any more information concerning this ideally located stronghold except that the country round about

²² The motive of Assiles and his outrages begins 5471, he himself enters the story 10040. By 10077 Gawein has slain him and put his army to rout. The utter disproportion of the introduction and the event would offend the artistic taste of the most lenient critic of mediæval romance. The Krone, is alas! full of these æsthetic sins.

is subject land. But the owner, it develops, is a very remarkable person. By the side of this giant other giants are but children. Ten kingdoms pay him tribute. Every writer impresses us with the height of the giant he brings forward; he towers above the trees, looms up like a tower, or wades deep waters. The superiority of Assiles to these is neatly couched in the simple statement "daz er die berge überschreite" (5525). The strength of a giant is always mentioned in the same breath with his name; but is there any other writer who would dare claim for his giant what is asserted of Assiles. Verily he had no need for the proverbial power of Christian faith for—

Die berge er ab ir stete truoc
An swelhe stat im beste geviel. (5527)

After this it is not surprising to learn that he uses trees for clubs and that his shield is a stone wall.

There is still a better reason why a castle should be given as the home of these giants. When a hero sets several hundred prisoners of a giant free, it is very evident that the giant can no longer be a homeless spirit of the woods, but must be master of a burc in which to keep his prisoners. This more than any other motive, perhaps, accounts for the large number of land-owning giants to be found in the court epic; for, as said above, the hero must not kill the giant for naught—somebody must hail him as liberator. To be sure, the giant may by magic keep his prisoners otherwise, as in Seifrid 27 f. where ain wilder ris detains four minicliche frawen, durch listt verzaubert bey ainer awen.²³ But this is quite exceptional. A case more in point is one which occurs later in the same poem. Seifrid sees a purck zw vleisz erpawen and rides toward it.

dar vor bey ainer stain wanndt mocht er schawen
ainn risen unnd des weyb gar ungehewre.
er hiess Schrutor, sein weib Rubal;
ire augen gevar nach aim kol glüenden fewre. (94)

The giants challenge the traveler's right to pass that way. When the excitement of the contest is over (it has to be repeated when the sons of the pair put in their appearance next day), the victor enters the burc and opens the door of the prison. He finds that the

²³ This incident belongs to the first part of the poem which here follows the old popular tradition of Siegfried. The Arthurian romance which has been grafted on to this, begins further on. Cf. Goither, *Deutsche Dichtung im Mittelalter* 246.

castle does not belong to the giants: they have imposed themselves on the owner and they use his home for a prison and storehouse. Both depositories were full, owing to the zeal with which the giants plied their vocation.

The counterparts of this giant pair are to be found in the ungehiwer Purdan and his unbescheiden wip, Fidegart, in der Pleier's Garel. The hero, intent on going ahead and winning an advantage for Arthur, comes in einen wilden walt through which he rides the whole day. Toward night he arrives at einer vesten klüse.²⁴ Here the giants dwell; from this point of vantage they control the whole forest.

nu stuont vor sinem hüse
der ungehiwer Purdân.
der het ein vestez harnasch an,
daz er zallen ziten truoc;
diu stange diu was grôz genuoc,
vierecke, staelin unde sneit
sin schilt was dicke unde breit.
sin swert was lanc, scharf und guot.
ein gespizten stælinen huot
het er mit einem nasebant. (5514)

The giant begins to abuse the unoffending knight as soon as he sees him, and the usual fight ensues. Fidegart now appears, armed in the same manner as her husband (with the addition of zwo isnin hosen guot), and the author has opportunity to repeat the battle. Having disposed of the giants the hero has time to examine the place where they lived. The "hûs" proves to be a regular burc with palas, kemenâten, hof, etc. The prison is in a wall of rock, out of reach of anyone but the giants, and Garel opens its huge stone door only by the magic help of the dwarf Albewin. The

²⁴ Klüse is used, Wolfdietrich D VII 128, to describe the home of the giantess Roma. There it may mean a rift in the rocks, a defile, or a pass in the mountains, a sense preserved in the NHG Klausen. At least, it refers only to the location of the dwelling. Der Pleier uses klüse constantly in reference to the abode of giants and makes it equivalent to the house itself. This meaning is, of course, justified by the origin of the word. I only wish to call attention to its significance here. The location is secluded but the dwelling is pre-tentious and well fortified. Cf. *infra* the case of the giants in Tandareis where klüse is used of the strongholds on the road through the marsh. In Garel 11173 the word means a stronghold which is actually situated in a mountain pass.

condition of the captives is pitiable beyond description. The author spares no pains to show how terrible and unhuman the giants were. The prisoners were held as an earnest that their families should pay regular tribute.

The climax in the delineation of robber giants is reached in Tandareis. The episode that deals with these characters takes up nearly four thousand lines of the poem (4150 f.). Here as in the *Krone* (cf. f. n. 22) there is a lengthy introduction, but the proportions are better preserved than in that poem and the whole is more rational, and to be sure, more prosaic. Considering that the hero wins his kingdom in this encounter the incident may not be said to be too much inflated.

Tandareis, lost in thoughts of his lady love, allows himself to be surprised by robbers in a wood and comes off severely wounded and with loss of his retinue. After having recuperated in the nearby town of Poytowe, he is passing through the forest again when he hears cries for help. He arrives on the scene in time to save a knight and a lady from the hands of the robbers, many of whom fall under the hero's lusty blows. From three who surrender Tandareis learns that his men are being held captive at the headquarters of the robbers. It appears that the robbers belong to a band of four hundred who are forced to this godless work by giants. By the report of the prisoners and in the further developments we have revealed to us a situation which surpasses anything of the kind to be found in *MHG*. A giant with the assistance of three others has perfected a system of robbery and slavery that calls for our admiration. A neighboring subject land furnishes the robbers, these keep up the stock of captives (more than 1,000), and from the labor of the unfortunate prisoners the giants have become wealthy. The place is well chosen for the business. To arrive at the citadel of the giants one has to traverse *den walt irresam* (5561), a process attended with greatest danger, as we have seen. If the adventurer manages this, he comes to a marsh bordering on the sea. Only one road leads through this swamp and it is fortified by three strongholds successively, (complete establishments filled with servants), each occupied by a giant. Finally after these outposts are passed, the *burc* itself is reached, which, of course, the captain of the band inhabits. This impregnable fortress is perched on a lofty rock, surrounded by the sea and the marsh and further

fortified by a wall.²⁵ It naturally devolves upon Tandareis to penetrate this nest of iniquity, not only to recover his men but also to deliver the host of other prisoners. When he has slain the giants, he chooses Malmontan for his own abode.

The foregoing examples do not exhaust der Pleier's stock of giants. Besides the four polite giants in Garel who guard the entrance into Ekunaver's land and who, in outward characteristics, present little new,²⁶ the unique figures of Pulaz and his com-

²⁵ diu burc ist hôch unde wit.
daz mos ist daz dar umbe lit
wol einer raste lanc. (5343)
. . . ich wæne nie
ein vester burc wart gesehen.
diu burc lit einhalb an dem mer . . .
vor einem hôhen steine.
der ist so hôch, daz kein man
des hat gedanc oder wân
daz er dar über komen möhte,
wan niemen daz entöhte:
daz gebirge ist hôch unde fram,
von dem steine get ein mûre dan
wol sehs rosseloufe lanc.
diu mûre hat den umbeswanc
von dem steine unz an daz mer genomen
dâ mac niemen über komen.
sô hôch diu mûre ist getriben.
vil manec man ist beliben
zwischen dem steine und der bürge wit
diu einhalb an dem mere lit
ûf einen velsen, der ist hôch. (5270)

²⁶ They enter the story in the same fashion as the others—in battle with the hero. Like the others they wear the full armor of the knight. Concerning their dwelling cf. the following:

. . . her reit der wîgant
vil rehte gein der klûse
(die risen wâren mit hûse)
die strâze durch den walt dar. . .
hôch âne mâze
lag ein turn ob dem tor.
dâ habt der edel ritter vor.
dâ enneben lag ein palas,
der hôch und sô wit was,
daz die ungefüegen man
wol ir gemach mohten hân
in dem selben hûse.
Garel hielt vor der klûse
und schowet diz veste werc.
ietwederhalbe was ein berc
hôch, ein slehtiu steinwant. (Garel 11155)

panions deserve mention, Meleranz has to ride "den sumerlangen tac durch vil grôze wilde, holz âne gevilde" before he comes to the clearing where they live (4265). The dwelling of these giants is not a klûse or burc but a log house in the midst of the clearing. Pulaz hints of better times in a better land across the sea before "der risen kûnc von Gazen" drove him and his companions into exile (4445 f.).

The dwarf²⁷ was, if possible, an even more favorite subject with the MHG writers than the giant. As a literary character it had most of the advantages that mark the giant and many others peculiar to itself, so that a great variety of interpretations was possible. Our authors by no means exhausted the possibilities, and the large majority of dwarfs that occur in this literature are conventionally portrayed. The dwarf lent itself to episodic treatment even more than the giant. The latter, once introduced, had to be disposed of to the satisfaction of the reader and the author. When the incident is closed the giant is either a loyal helper of the hero or, more usually, is past the possibility of harming anyone else. Toward the dwarfs the author felt this responsibility to a less extent. They come and go in the poems in a way that characterizes no other Elementargeist. But dwarfs were often used to better ends: some of the most interesting characters in MHG belong to this class.

In a pause in his battle with Selmunt, Wolddietrich receives advice and help from a dwarf named Bibunc. He appears suddenly and as suddenly vanishes (Wolddietrich D IV 40-55). The same hero is again rescued by a dwarf when he escapes the heathens by riding into the sea: the dwarf appears on the shore, warns the hero, brings him a boat, and thus saves him. The dwarf further serves the hero by directing him to where his brothers are. Then—

dô dankte dem getwerge der küene wigant

and the character is dismissed without another word. A getwerge in Wolddietrich A (582-585) has an even more insignificant rôle: he tries to warn the hero of the approach of the dragon when the knight lies asleep before the dwarf's "stein." It is left to the

²⁷ For a history of the dwarf in MHG from the mythological standpoint see August Lütjens: *Der Zwerg in der deutschen Heldendichtung des Mittelalters*, Breslau 1911.

horse to finish the task of waking his master, and the dwarf is not disposed of at all.²⁸

One of the most picturesque of these minor characters who are introduced to serve the immediate needs of the hero, is the dwarf in Sanct Brandan. The good saint is suffering one of those many mishaps that characterize his seafaring, and the ship's company call loudly on *gotes trûte* for deliverance. Somewhere in the dim distance a dwarf hears the cry. He prevails on a hermit to accompany him and the two strange companions set out in a boat mit *eime segele cleine*. The author describes what Brandan and his companions see: in the prow under the sail sits the hermit;

hinter im sâhen sie ouch stân
ein getwerc grûwelich getân,
daz stûnt an dem stûre.
ez dûhte sie wesen ungehûre.
daz getwerc daz hiez Botewart.
vil michel grôz was im sin bart
und daz hâr alsô lanc.
êrlichen daz getwerc sanc
heidenische schone lit.
im was die kel alsô wit
und die stimme alsô grôz
daz sie als ein horn irdôz.
er hatte ein stûre in der hant.
im was al sin gewant
pfellin und sidin. (1553)

The little steersman extricates the unfortunate travelers from their predicament and *arbeite vaste dort den kiel sô daz ez in allen wol geviel*.

These casual characters, if that term may be allowed, throw but little light on the dwarf's surroundings. They only show what we might expect, namely, that the simplest conception of the dwarf locates him free in nature. From this indefinite notion we can trace an elaboration in the abode of this Elementargeist that corresponds largely to the same process in the case of the giant. And while, just as in that case, this development cannot be followed in strictly chronological order, it is still true that the most circumstantially described homes are to be found in the later court poetry.

The traditional home of the dwarf is within a mountain. "Im walde vant er einen berc, den hâten gar wildiu getwerc erbûwen

²⁸ In Seifrid 21 a dwarf comes out of his *höl* to warn the hero of a dragon. This character is somewhat more pretentious than those mentioned above. Another in the same poem (222) is dispatched in two strophes.

und bezessen," is the way in which the author describes Dietrich's coming to Goldemar's abode. Most often it is *holer berc* or *holer stein*, as in *Sigenot*. Dwarfs of this type are nearly always discovered in or near their cave (for such is evidently the conception of these places).²⁹ The dwarf in *Eilhart's Tristan* is sought out by Tristan's enemies and is brought to court for a short time, but he is out of his element and returns to the woods for safety. Later on, the *truhsæze*, while hunting in the forest, sees the dwarf in the neighborhood of a mountain, scurrying away through the woods (3774 f.). This incident gives a strong impression of the elemental nature of the character, an impression which is intensified by the fact that the dwarf is here chased and captured as if it were some small animal.

Alberich, the father of Ortnit, also inhabits a mountain. It is under a linden in front of the same that the knight comes upon him asleep and takes him for a beautiful child that has strayed from its mother. The author of this poem has presented us with a character whose personal appearance is at variance with that of the other dwarfs to be found in MHG literature. Like the giant, the dwarf usually provokes comment from the author by his size; other features, it would seem, were not remarkable enough to commemorate. When we come to the dwarfs who are represented as knights, personal appearance is equivalent to the accoutrements, which are generally described in detail. The ordinary dwarf does not attain to such distinction. We know that the Alberich of the *Nibelungenliet* was an *altgriser* man with a beard (497) and *dar zuo starc genuoc* (494). Botewart (Brandan. cf. citation above) was also strong; furthermore he was not good to look on (*grûwelich getân*) and *vil michel grôz* was im *sin bart*, und *daz hâr also lanc*. *Wolfdietrich A* (582) and *Sigenot* (33) furnish other examples of bearded dwarfs.³⁰ We may well suppose that the general conception of the dwarf was that it was not handsome, but the evidence is too meagre for us to draw any definite conclusion. We can only

²⁹ Ruodlieb captures a dwarf in front of its "antrum" (XVIII 28). The term *daz hol* is not infrequently used.

³⁰ Giants also have beards sometimes. Hildebrant says:
etlichen weiz ich under in:
die tragen klâfterlangen bart. (Virginal 621)

say that the Alberich of Ortnit is the only one whose beauty is attested.³¹

The plot of Virginal—if this grotesque structure may be said to have such—centers about the berc of the queen of the dwarfs. But despite this fact one may read the poem through without getting any conception as to the exact nature of the place. That it is a pretentious dwelling is evident enough for Virginal is very rich (28; cf. also “die guldin berge” 492) and the inhabitants of the holer stein are numerous and richly clad. The interior is fittingly lighted:

riches gesteines vil dá lac:
daz gap in dem berge licht,
rehte als wære der liehte tac. (686)

There is a drawbridge and a giant porter (685). This berc is spacious enough for the queen to entertain many guests there. Virginal's favorite haunt, however, is the flowered meadow before the berc where she erects her wonderful tent beside a brook (124, 560, 566, etc.). This retreat and the berc are so confused that it is often hard to tell which the author really means. Virginal herself is not a dwarf and does not belong in the holer berc; like the merminne in *Salman* (728) she is there by attraction, as it were, of her subjects, whose claim to the holer berc is indisputable and inalienable. The tent on the meadow is more naturally her dwelling; in as far as the dwarfs share this with her, they are out of their element.³²

Although the nature of Virginal's berc is vaguely indicated, it is clear that it is no longer a question of a mere cave. The whole is too elaborate for that. The author is throughout bordering on

³¹ There can be no doubt that the friendly or hostile attitude of the author toward the character has much to do with his conception of its appearance. “Handsome is as handsome does” is too evidently a principle of mediæval romance-writing, not to apply here. It is impossible to conceive the malicious dwarf of French epics as other than ugly even if his misshapen form were not mentioned. By the same token the knightly dwarf too often approaches the ideal of chivalry to be taken for a hunchback, or perhaps even to be considered ugly at all. Female dwarfs always have the sympathy of the author and are nearly always represented as winsome and pretty.

³² Examples of dwarfs that are entirely removed from their natural abode are abundant enough in MHG. The type is most common in the court epic; Melot in *Tristan* is probably the best known example. They need not be considered here since their dwelling is identical with that of the humans among whom they live.

the conception of a *burc* as is shown by numerous details. In 506 the usual phrase "*der berc ze Jeraspunt*" (87, 441, 664, etc.) is even replaced by "*ein burc ze Geraspunt*." What is but indicated in *Virginal* is plainly stated in *Wolfdietrich B.* The hero, tired from his encounter with the dragons, sits down by his wife on the ground.

er entschlief ir in ir schôze. dâ kam ein wilder man
und verstal im die frouwen: ein tarnkappen truoc er an.
Er fourt si durch den walt gën einem berge dan,
dar ûz sicherlichen ein schoener brunne ran.
an leite er ir ein kappen, ein wurz gaber ir in den munt:
er fuort si durch den brunnen an der selben stunt. (795)

Four years *Wolfdietrich* seeks his wife. He comes at last to the spring and sits him down to rest. His wife, looking out of a window in the mountain, spies him there. She tells the dwarf, "*ez ist ein iudischer man komen für den berc*," and prevails on him to bring the wanderer inside. The dwarf in order to leave the *berc* uses a *kappe* and a *wurz*, and *Wolfdietrich* comes in by the same means.

Als nu Wolfdietrich kom in der berc gegân,
dô sach er in dem berge ein schoene burc stân.
an der selben bürge wol zwei hundert türne lac:
die zinnen uf der mûre lûhten als der liechte tac. (806)

This is only the beginning of the wonders which the knight sees in the *berc*. *Billunc*, the dwarf, shows him about with pride; first in a garden whose chief attraction is a wonderful linden with that favorite device of golden tubes and singing birds; then in the palas—

dar inne was gerihet an der selben zit
wol fünf hundert tische, daz sage ich iu für wâr:
ob ieglichem hundert twerc, diu wâr ze wunsche gar. (810)

After *Wolfdietrich* has conquered *Billunc* and has recovered his wife, he is shown further wonders in the *berc* by another dwarf, who then brings the knight and his lady into the outer world again.

Probably no poem in *MHG* makes such an impression of unity on the reader as *Laurin*. It has no side plots, no wandering episodes. The action is motivated by the character of *Laurin* and it transpires almost entirely in his abode. The dwarf appears in the story after a brief introduction. *Dietrich* hears of this adventure of the *rosengarten* guarded by a *degen herlich*, and reproaches

Meister Hildebrant for not having told him of it. The young Berner is seized with a desire to see this thing:

“ich wil suochen die rôsen rôt
und solde ich komen in grôze nôt.” (79)

A ride of seven miles or more through the forest brings them to a green meadow where the rose garden lies. The devastation of the flowers has the desired effect: Laurin is not slow to come to avenge the wrong. This tiny being (*der ist kûme drier spannen lanc*. 55) presents the figure of a knight in miniature. The spear which he brings to bear on the intruders is gold-adorned and hung with a silken embroidered banner. His spotted horse, no bigger than a deer, is richly caparisoned; the saddle is of ivory; the reins, stirrups, the golden coverlet, are all bejeweled. The dwarf himself is fitted out in armor cap-a-pie, the description of which gives the author evident pleasure.

After the preliminary skirmish on the meadow, Laurin entices the knights to go with him to see the wonders of his *berc*. They reach the place early next morning. Here they find a veritable fairyland. The inevitable linden shades einen wûnneclichen plân. Blossoms—

maneger leie swes man wil
oder imer erdenken mac:
die gâben alle sîezen smac.

Every sort of bird that sings is here, each singing in its own manner but all in harmony. More typical still of other-world habitations are the strange beasts that disport themselves on the meadow; *si wâren heimelîche gezemet und ûf den selben plân gewenet* (919). Dietrich believes himself in paradise, but Laurin assures his guests that this is but a foretaste of the *fröude* within the *berc*. The author now tries to prove this assertion. When the guests enter the *berc* (by a little door, which closes and leaves no trace of the opening), they find themselves in a place of unsurpassed richness. The ceiling is hung with jewels, the tables are of ivory, the seats are of gold.

allez daz diu werlt sol haben
des was der *berc* vol geladen. (1001)³³

A definite plan of Laurin's dwelling is not to be expected. The author is (literally) dealing in glittering generalities and does not

³³ The inhabitants of the *berc* are naturally in keeping with their surroundings. The dwarfs are *ritter lobesam* wearing *daz beste gewant daz man in allen landen vant* (992). Besides the rich attire, the beauty of the female dwarfs is mentioned (1055).

condescend to irksome details. In this mountain there is room for all sorts of games, as well as for knightly exercise (1017). We hear of various apartments—a dining hall, *kemenâten* (1199, 1294), and a *gemach* (1242). The knights discover to their sorrow that there is also a prison (1211).

The home of Jerome, the dwarf queen, in *Friedrich von Schwaben* is another of these marvelous hollow mountains—perhaps the most marvelous of them all. The dwellings of Laurin and Billunc were remarkable for their wonderful fittings and for their richness in general. That of Jerome distinguishes itself by other qualities. Before the *berc* is the playground of the dwarfs, the usual *wunnigclicher* plan (2427). Here the half starved Friedrich finds the company in his wanderings in search of *Augelburg*. Jerome, *ain kunigin, ain zwergin lobesam*, has spread her tent here *durch kurtzweil unnd aubentur*. She attains both in the person of the knight who accepts her offer of meat and drink on the spot, and later goes with her *haim ze husz* in the *holer berc*. The passion of the little queen for the guest occupies the author at first so that we learn little of her surroundings until this passion is satisfied. It quickly develops, however, that the hero is a prisoner, for the *berc* of Jerome like those of Laurin and Billunc can be entered or quitted only by supernatural aid (2622 f.). But it is the proportions of the interior that are astonishing. It is not merely a *burc* that we have to picture to ourselves. The author gives indications of a whole country within the mountain. Besides the jousting (2598) of the tiny knights, there is real fighting: the *berc* is invaded by other dwarfs (3158) and a battle on horseback takes place (3177). Friedrich himself rides from place to place (3078). It is on one of these excursions that he finds a maid in chains—the one who betrayed the *berc* to the enemy—who gives him a portion of the magic stone that opens the mountain.

Jerome's *berc* marks the climax of this sort of dwelling. But there is another kind which presents the dwarf among surroundings even more similar to those of humans. The last vestige of the traditional abode has vanished—there is no more question of a *holer berc* whether in the sense of a mere cave or of a *burc* within a *berc*. A case of this sort of habitation is contained in the *Eckenliet* 202-207. After Dietrich has conquered Vasolt, the two ride away through the forest together. They direct their course

gên einer bürge schöne
diu was hôch und wunnesan.
ir phlac ein gar weniger man
mit einer guldin crône.

This castle with its hundred towers lies out of reach of ballistra and catapult, and no stone but that of the hail has ever touched its lead roof (203). The palas in which the guests are dined might well contain the throng of dwarfs that gather there, for—

er was sô wit und ouch sô lanc
man möhte drinne riten. (204)

The host holds burc and land in fief from Vasolt. The purpose of the visit of the giant and the knight is to transfer this allegiance to Dietrich. This is soon accomplished and the travelers pass on.

The most sustained attempt at portraying a dwarf land and dwarf castle is met with in Berthold's Demantin (6907 f.). The adventure in this case does not befall Demantin himself, but his friend Firganant, who has set out to bring help to the former. Some time after leaving home, Firganant reaches a wilderness through which he rides four days without seeing anything but heath and ungeverte—"menschin er ni vornam." At last he comes in sight of a mountain toward which he now directs his way in the desperate hope of discovering inhabited land from its summit. When he comes to the mountain—

einen twerg he sitzen vant
vor om ûf eime steine.
di man di was sô cleine,
be enhette mit al siner macht
om bobin sin gortel nicht geracht.
der twerg di entfinc den helt alsô,
he sprach "her koning, ich bin vrô
daz ir sit komen in min lant." (6944)

The starving knight asks for food, which Comandion, the dwarf, assures him he shall have. He winds his sapphire horn, whereupon a dwarf rides up leading his master's mount, a snow-white horse no bigger than a deer³⁴ (6973). The author pauses here long enough to describe the trappings. These are naturally of the richest sort: the ornaments are of good red gold, beautifully wrought; the reins consist of rubies and jacinths; the bridle itself is of borten, set with stones, one of which, on the horse's crest, is so brilliant "daz di sunne nê sô helle schein." Comandion himself is richly

³⁴ Cf. Laurin's steed (166), which Witege also compares to a goat (346). Bibunc's horse is as big as a hîrz, but three times as strong (Virginal 142-143).

dressed in a suit of velvet set with jewels, the work of "cleine vrouweline."

The dwarf springs into the saddle and leads his guest to his home, the Castle of Taiphan. Strangely enough this burc is not even situated *on* a mountain, but is "gebûwet wol nach rechte ûf eime grôzin breiten plân" (7020). The idea of a securely fortified place is not uppermost in the author's mind.³⁵ Rather, he stresses its elegance. Comandion is a distinguished personage whose abode corresponds to what we have already seen of him. In this marble palas one drinks from beakers of precious stone. The fingerbowls are of gold. The banquet is served by beautiful women (7100). The hall itself is richly appointed, adorned with the portraits of the most famous heroes of the time.

The unusual feature of this episode, however, is that the author attempts by every means possible to take the reader into another world. Firganant not only spends some time in reaching and leaving Comandion's land, but the conditions there—while in every respect patterned on those of humans—are made to suit the little inhabitants. The poet makes a point of the fact that the door of the palace was large enough for the knight to pass through, thus indicating that this was exceptional. The adjective "clein" as well as the diminutive ending is applied to all that pertains to this people. But most extraordinary of all is the creation of a giant race to correspond to the dwarfs. When Comandion says (7159 et al.) that he has made the conquest of other lands by means of the giants who serve him, one must assume that these lands were inhabited by dwarfs; for Comandion's giants are but the size of a fourteen year old human (7032). The giantesses are comparable to girls of ten or twelve (7110, 7670), and instead of being repulsive in appearance, as giantesses are wont to be, possess a remarkable charm and beauty (7077, 7338).—Firganant is a sort of Gulliver among Lilliputians. But although the episode is told with the simple intention of entertaining the reader, it is far from being humorously meant. The author has sought to please by a fantastic invention which he has ornamented in every way possible.

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³⁵ This contrasts with the case in the Eckenliet just cited. The extreme remoteness of Comandion's burc is very much emphasized and must be considered its chief defence. Furthermore the dwarf is a powerful sovereign whose land could not well be invaded.